

# France's New NATO Policy

## Leveraging a Realignment of the Alliance?

*Gisela Müller-Brandeck-Bocquet*

FRENCH PRESIDENT Nicolas Sarkozy entered office with the intention of fundamentally revitalizing his country following many years of stagnation—and in doing so he did not shrink from violating one of the long-standing taboos of French defense and security policy. Beginning in mid-2007, Sarkozy gave notice on several occasions that he intended to complete the process begun by his predecessors of reintegrating France into NATO's military structures and to normalize overall French relations with NATO. The move was officially announced on 11 March and consummated during the celebrations marking the 60th anniversary of NATO's founding, held on 3–4 April 2009 in Strasbourg and Kehl,<sup>1</sup> thus bringing to an end the special status that France had held to in the alliance since 1966. The special character of France's relationship to NATO had been aimed primarily at guaranteeing French independence and influence internationally and was not only an integral element of the country's national identity but also placed France in the role of the alliance's enfant terrible—often the sole, unequivocal opponent of American dominance of Europe.

“Speedy Sarko,” as the unusually forceful and lively French president is often called, has broken with the conventions of French NATO policy in such a way as to divide the country's political establishment and place in doubt the Fifth Republic's broad political consensus on defense and

---

Reprinted with courtesy from *Die Aussenpolitik der USA: Präsident Obamas neuer Kurs und die Zukunft der transatlantischen Beziehungen* [*The Foreign Policy of the USA: President Obama's New Course and the Future of Transatlantic Relations*], Berichte & Studien Nr. 89 [Reports & Studies no. 89], ed. Reinhard C. Meier-Walser (Munich: Hanns-Seidel Foundation, 2009), ISBN 978-3-88795-344-7, <http://www.hss.de/english/politics-education/academy-for-politics-and-current-affairs.html>. Book may be ordered from [http://www.hss.de/mediathek/publikationen/detailinformationen.html?tx\\_ddceventsbrowser\\_pi2%5Bpublication\\_id%5D=279](http://www.hss.de/mediathek/publikationen/detailinformationen.html?tx_ddceventsbrowser_pi2%5Bpublication_id%5D=279).

Dr. Gisela Müller-Brandeck-Bocquet studied political science in Grenoble, France, and Munich, Germany. Since 1996, she has been professor of European integration and international relations at the University of Würzburg, Germany. Her most recent books include *The Future of the European Foreign, Security and Defense Policy after Enlargement* (Baden-Baden, 2006); *Die Afrikapolitik der Europäischen Union* (Opladen, 2007); and *Deutsche Europapolitik: Von Konrad Adenauer bis Angela Merkel* (Wiesbaden, 2009).

<b>Report Documentation Page</b>			<i>Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188</i>					
<p>Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.</p>								
1. REPORT DATE <b>2009</b>	2. REPORT TYPE	3. DATES COVERED <b>00-00-2009 to 00-00-2009</b>						
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE  <b>France's New NATO Policy. Leveraging a Realignment of the Alliance?</b>			5a. CONTRACT NUMBER					
			5b. GRANT NUMBER					
			5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER					
6. AUTHOR(S)			5d. PROJECT NUMBER					
			5e. TASK NUMBER					
			5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER					
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) <b>Air University, Strategic Studies Quarterly, 155 N. Twining Street, Building 693, Maxwell AFB, AL, 36112-6026</b>			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER					
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)			10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)					
			11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)					
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT <b>Approved for public release; distribution unlimited</b>								
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES <b>See also ADA510198.</b>								
14. ABSTRACT								
15. SUBJECT TERMS								
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:  <table border="1" style="display: inline-table; vertical-align: middle;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">a. REPORT <b>unclassified</b></td> <td style="padding: 2px;">b. ABSTRACT <b>unclassified</b></td> <td style="padding: 2px;">c. THIS PAGE <b>unclassified</b></td> </tr> </table>			a. REPORT <b>unclassified</b>	b. ABSTRACT <b>unclassified</b>	c. THIS PAGE <b>unclassified</b>	17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT  <b>Same as Report (SAR)</b>	18. NUMBER OF PAGES  <b>15</b>	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT <b>unclassified</b>	b. ABSTRACT <b>unclassified</b>	c. THIS PAGE <b>unclassified</b>						

security policy. The question is, Just what does Sarkozy hope to achieve through such a striking change in policy? Has he joined the Atlanticists? Or does he hope to improve his chances of pursuing long-established French objectives in the alliance? To answer these questions, we must examine the complex strategic thinking on which France's normalization of relations with NATO rests. This in turn requires that we first assess the special position France has held in NATO.

## **France's Rapprochement with NATO during the 1990s**

On 7 March 1966, France withdrew from NATO's integrated military structures and nuclear weapons program, though it remained a member of the Atlantic Pact. This was de Gaulle's reaction to Anglo-American dominance of the alliance as well as to the shift in US strategy to that of flexible nuclear response, which allowed for the possibility of conflict in Europe using nuclear weapons.<sup>2</sup> Since then, French security and defense policy has been guided by the Gaullist "principle that asserts: Whenever the West is under threat, France will stand in solidarity with the Western community of values; but in times of peace, it will seek to preserve its independence, in particular vis-à-vis the United States."<sup>3</sup>

The first noteworthy divergence from this course occurred under Socialist president François Mitterrand (1981–95). Mitterrand was decidedly more transatlantic in his views than were his predecessors. So much so, in fact, that at the time of the NATO Double-Track Decision, he offered the alliance his complete support, even urging approval of the rearmament effort during a speech before the German parliament in January 1983, which included the dictum, "Les pacifists sont à l'Ouest mais les missiles sont à l'Est" ["The pacifists are in the West but the missiles are in the East"]. But even though Mitterrand recognized the paramount role NATO played in Europe's (and France's) security, he chose to hold firm to France's special position in the alliance for the time being. It was only in response to the Gulf War of 1991 that he developed a new NATO policy. France, which had 14,500 troops involved in the operation, suffered the bitter experience of seeing just how inferior its own military capabilities were in comparison to those of the Americans. "France's experience of participating in a multinational force commanded by a US general under NATO procedures . . . was both humiliating and revealing—particularly for the military. Any illusion which might have remained about France's (and Europe's) capacity to

underwrite the collective security of the continent was shattered in the Saudi Arabian desert.”<sup>4</sup> The Gulf War, therefore, can be understood as the “turning point in French NATO policy.”<sup>5</sup> By 1993, as NATO involvement in a disintegrating Yugoslavia appeared in the offing, Paris came to the realization that rapprochement with NATO, perhaps even reintegration, could increase France’s influence in the alliance.

After Defense Minister Pierre Joxe declared that France “must be present in the relevant bodies . . . where . . . decisions about our security are made,”<sup>6</sup> Paris once again began participating in the work of the NATO military committee, starting in April of 1993. In 1996, Francois Léotard became the first French minister of defense to attend a—albeit informal—meeting of NATO defense ministers.<sup>7</sup> But while some observers at the time reckoned with France’s full reintegration into NATO structures, Mitterrand chose not to go beyond what were on the whole rather limited steps toward rapprochement.

Pres. Jacques Chirac (1995–2007) propelled this pro-Atlantic process a step further. During the war in Bosnia (1991–95), Europe was again confronted with its own military inferiority vis-à-vis America, whereupon Chirac announced in December 1995 that France would officially rejoin the Council of Defense Ministers as well as the military council, leaving one final hurdle to complete the process of reintegration: the return to the alliance’s military structures. Chirac saw an opportunity for France’s full reintegration in the adoption of the Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) concept in Berlin in January of 1996, which permitted Europeans to establish their own separate security and defense identity—a European pillar in NATO. The CJTF concept accorded with Chirac’s notion of a new NATO that allowed France “à prendre toute sa place” [to take her rightful place].<sup>8</sup> Before the CJTF concept could be implemented, however, the command positions within the European pillar first had to be defined. Since NATO’s commander in Europe, the SACEUR (Supreme Allied Commander in Europe), is always an American, Chirac, with the support of Germany, called for the appointment of Europeans to the regional command posts, with selection based on a rotation system. Chirac was interested in particular in the post of Commander of Allied Forces, South Europe, based in Naples. But the United States refused to assign a European officer to this strategically important post on the European Southern Command, prompting France to decide to remain outside NATO’s military structures.

In retrospect, it seems strange that Chirac would commit the tactical mistake of announcing France's return without first negotiating its price.<sup>9</sup>

## **France's Unsatisfying Position in NATO**

Though America's intransigence in 1997 caused Chirac to suspend the process of formal reintegration into NATO, he did essentially move de facto rapprochement forward in the wake of 9/11. In 2002 he approved both France's massive participation in the NATO Response Force (NRF) and in the new ACT Command (Allied Command Transformation) in Norfolk, Virginia.<sup>10</sup> Since 2004, France has had a contingent of 100 officers at the integrated command structures (SHAPE in Mons and ACT in Norfolk). But the roughly 280 military personnel detailed to cooperation duties with NATO constitute "only about 10 percent of the German or British" personnel assigned to the same task.<sup>11</sup> In spite of France's de facto participation in the integrated structures of NATO, its peculiar position within the alliance means that it is not part of the standing chain of command—and consequently occupies none of the senior command posts. There are also two central NATO structures to which France still does not belong: the Nuclear Planning Group (NPG) and the Defense Planning Committee (DPC).

By contrast, French operational and financial contributions to NATO have been substantial. France, which has participated in all out-of-area NATO operations since 2003, contributed (as of 2007) the third largest contingent of troops and was the fourth largest financial contributor in the alliance.<sup>12</sup> This is not compensated, however, by a commensurate level of influence within the alliance, so that from the French perspective, the cost-benefit calculation is a negative one. As a result, Frédéric Bozo has referred to France's "unsatisfactory role" within the alliance, since "the involvement of France at decision-making levels is still proportionally much less than its operational participation."<sup>13</sup> In addition, the development of NATO during President Bush's eight years in office has been characterized by the operating principle in which the mission determines the coalition, muscling aside any approach grounded in greater partnership and cooperation. President Sarkozy has sufficient reason, therefore, to put an end to France's unsatisfactory, thankless, and untenable position in NATO.

## **Sarkozy's New NATO Policy: The Announcements**

Sarkozy first announced his new NATO policy in a speech delivered before a gathering of ambassadors in Paris on 27 August 2007. This came as a surprise, since the topic had not come up during the French election campaign. After appealing for a “new élan” in the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP), Sarkozy stressed that there was no rivalry between the EU and NATO, that they instead complemented one another. “I hope,” Sarkozy continued, “that in the coming months we can pursue both the strengthening of the Europe of defense and the renewal of NATO, as well as NATO’s relationship to France in general. Each is bound up together with the other: an autonomous Europe of defense and a transatlantic alliance in which we will be able to play our role to its fullest extent.”<sup>14</sup>

The second time Sarkozy spoke about his NATO plans was in an address before the US Congress on 7 November 2007. He began by first reminding his audience that, in light of global instability, the United States needed a strong and resolute Europe. “There are more crises than there are means of dealing with them. And since NATO cannot be everywhere at once, it is essential that Europe be capable of taking action itself.” After he had, rather pedagogically, emphasized the “legitimate strategic interest” on both sides of the Atlantic in a strong Europe, he went on to speak of his new NATO policy:

Standing here at this podium before Congress, I say to you: the more successful a Europe of defense is, the more likely it is that France’s decision to fully assume its place in NATO will become a reality. I hope that France, a founding member of the alliance and one of its most important troop contributors, will be able to assume an important role in renewing the alliance’s means and capabilities and that France will be able to further develop its relationship with the alliance in parallel with the further development and greater empowerment of the Europe of defense.

Sarkozy spoke in closing of a “credible and strong Europe within a newly structured alliance.”<sup>15</sup>

Sarkozy broached his new policy approach for the third time on 3 April 2008, during the NATO summit in Bucharest. Having announced prior to the meeting that France would increase the size of its contingent in Afghanistan by roughly 1,000 troops, he repeated to his colleagues his intention not to reduce defense expenditures, regardless of current budget problems. Following this dual commitment by France to stand together with its alliance partners in the fight against terrorism, Sarkozy then went on the offensive. He restated the need for both NATO and a strong Europe

of defense. Sarkozy's position found favor with President Bush, who on 2 April 2008 unexpectedly announced, "Building a strong NATO alliance also requires a strong European defense capacity." Sarkozy eagerly took up Bush's comment, thanking him twice in his Bucharest address for the remark. "This opens the possibility for France to fundamentally renew its relationship to NATO." And for the first time, he set forth a date for the implementation of the new policy; the process of normalization would be consummated at the NATO summit scheduled for 3–4 April 2009 to be held in both Kehl and Strasbourg on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the alliance's founding. "This act will serve as a symbol of Franco-German friendship, European reconciliation, and transatlantic partnership."<sup>16</sup>

## **The Dual Arrangement in Sarkozy's New NATO Policy**

A closer examination of Sarkozy's series of statements shows that it would be a mistake to conclude that his new approach is merely an expression of the new president's "Atlanticism" or that it can be interpreted as a desire to steal the title of Washington's most devoted ally from the British or Germans. While it is doubtless true that Sarkozy is the most pro-American of any president in the history of the Fifth Republic, his NATO initiative is not an example of that.

Sarkozy is instead attempting to resolve the dilemmas of France's existing status in NATO. Based on the foregoing account, these can be described as follows:<sup>17</sup> How can the discrepancy be resolved between France's limited influence in the alliance and its actual contributions? In view of the relative isolation arising from its peculiar status in the alliance, how can Paris obtain effective leverage over the long-term developments in the alliance? And how can France simultaneously place its decades-old efforts toward a Europe capable of acting on its own in defense and security policy, a Europe *Puissance*,<sup>18</sup> on a sustained road toward success?

The president's solution consists of a dual arrangement that ties France's full reentry into NATO to certain conditions. This in itself signals that Sarkozy has no intention of quietly joining the ranks of the Atlanticists. Instead, he expects that his decision to reenter NATO will lend ESDP—l'Europe de la defense, as he likes to refer to it—a new vitality. This constitutes the first part of the arrangement. A strengthened European Security and Defense Policy that operates in partnership with NATO, whose contribution to international security the United States expressly

welcomes, will inevitably increase Europe's standing in NATO. The second part of the arrangement is directly related to this: France will only rejoin a remodeled NATO—a remodeling, as France sees it, in which the asymmetry in favor of the United States that has existed since the alliance's founding should end and in which Europe is recognized as an equal partner in matters of defense and security policy. "A France that fully assumes its role in NATO presupposes an alliance in which Europe is given a greater part to play."<sup>19</sup>

Thus, to make France's complete reintegration into NATO palatable to the French electorate, Sarkozy set forth a complex approach linked to a series of arrangements which argued that France would only rejoin a reformed NATO that accepts ESDP as an equal partner. But to make this approach credible, ESDP would have to make fundamental progress in moving beyond the rather modest status it had achieved by 1999. According to Sarkozy, a substantive strengthening of ESDP again presupposes that France relinquishes its special status and becomes a "normal" NATO member. The president takes the view—as all his statements indicate—that France can only advance the development of ESDP as a full member of NATO, since a France that insists on its special status in the alliance only provokes mistrust and a tendency to obstruction on both sides of the Atlantic, owing to persistent suspicions that France is trying to weaken the transatlantic alliance. For decades this was indeed a central reason why an integrated Europe accepted US dominance and explains why it practiced abstinence in defense and security policy matters through the end of the 1990s—and why development of ESDP has proceeded only sluggishly since then.<sup>20</sup> This mistrust is constantly being stoked as a consequence of EU expansion eastward, since—aside from a traditionally ESDP-skeptical Britain—the pronounced Atlanticism of the new members in Eastern Europe leads them to accuse France of seeking to weaken the alliance. Sarkozy's new NATO policy, therefore, serves to a great degree to build trust in the EU-27 as a prerequisite for strengthening ESDP.

While there is much that would in fact indicate that France's return to NATO should significantly spur the development of ESDP, it remains to be seen whether France's reintegration will lead to greater French influence in the alliance. This is related to—and thus forms another aspect of France's call for a reformed alliance—Paris' view that fundamental NATO reforms are essential and its search for the means to actively shape those reforms. France wants—for quite some time, actually—to scale down the outsized military apparatus of NATO and to adapt it to new strategic needs. Secondly,

Paris seeks—again, for years—to limit the growing politicization of the alliance to prevent it from becoming the cornerstone of international order—one dominated by the United States. This defensive action against a globally operating and politicized NATO was initiated under Mitterrand in light of the rapid expansion of the alliance following the end of the Cold War.<sup>21</sup> In view of American NATO policy during the Bush years—in which the mission determined the coalition and where Washington placed greatest value on the alliance's role in legitimizing American actions—Paris renewed its effort against the “globalization” of NATO, for example by joining together with Germany in opposing quick membership for Georgia and the Ukraine. Included among the classic reform demands France seeks in NATO is the previously mentioned desire to see Europeans given greater influence in the alliance—including high-ranking command posts—to put an end to asymmetry (i.e., American dominance). In light of the far-reaching demands for reform that Paris has always directed at NATO, it seems doubtful that normalization will bring about a reorientation of the alliance in accordance with French designs.<sup>22</sup>

### **Strengthening ESDP as a Counterpart to French Reintegration—Mission Accomplished?**

When President Sarkozy presents his new NATO policy as primarily benefitting Europe, in concrete terms this means that he places highest priority on strengthening ESDP. France's assumption of the EU presidency during the second half of 2008 presented him with the opportunity to take effective action in this regard. Sarkozy seized the opportunity and declared the goal of giving new momentum to ESDP as one of the four main elements of his agenda during France's six-month term in the EU presidency. Specifically, France planned to formulate a new *European Security Strategy* (ESS) that would replace the document passed in 2007. As his first priority, however, Sarkozy sought to expand ESDP's military and civilian capacities.<sup>23</sup> Intensified cooperation between the EU and NATO, also part of the presidential agenda, was supported by a paper containing far-ranging proposals for cooperation that France had presented to the NATO Council in October of 2003. As one commentator observed, with this step Paris set aside its traditional resistance to rapprochement between the EU and NATO, substantially accommodating the wishes of both Washington and London.<sup>24</sup>

Given French ambitions and prior concessions, one must ask whether Sarkozy, as EU president, has indeed given measureable new momentum to ESDP. Or have the turbulent events that occurred during France's EU presidency—Irish rejection of the Lisbon Treaty on 12 June 2008,<sup>25</sup> the war between Russia and Georgia in August of 2008, as well as the financial crisis beginning in the fall of that year—thrown Sarkozy off of his plans as Europe's senior crisis manager?

The answer is clearly no; for, largely unnoticed by the general public, the European Council on 11–12 December 2008 “reaffirmed its intention to take concrete steps to lend new momentum to European security and defense policy and thereby take into account the new responsibilities that have arisen with respect to Europe's security.”<sup>26</sup> The “Statement of the European Council on the Consolidation of the ESDP” contains everything France had proposed: a revision of the *ESS*; the pledge to remedy the “inadequacies in Europe's existing capabilities through the gradual improvement of its civilian and military capacities,” together with a detailed “Statement on Improving Capabilities”<sup>27</sup>; the commitment to be able to simultaneously conduct up to 19 military and civilian ESDP missions of differing dimensions; and an “*Erasmus militaire*” to promote cooperation in training efforts; as well as an explicit declaration “to improve cooperation between the EU and NATO . . . in full complementarity . . . within a framework of renewed transatlantic partnership.” For this purpose, “an informal high-level EU-NATO group” should be established, as per France's proposal. The single, albeit serious, deficiency remaining in ESDP resolutions relates to the highly sensitive question as to the development of an independent European central command and the European Council's inclination to merely endorse the efforts undertaken by Solana “toward the creation of a new integrated structure for civil-military planning” of ESDP operations. It was Great Britain, above all, that rebuffed French plans to add 20–30 additional personnel to the 90 already serving in the still embryonic EU Operations Center.<sup>28</sup> And yet, following the summit in December 2008, Defense Minister Hervé Morin declared nevertheless that “everything we put on the table a year ago is now in the works.”<sup>29</sup>

## Will Reintegration Mean the End of the “Exception Française”?

Sarkozy's new NATO policy is based on the recognition that France's special role in the alliance has become untenable and is no longer in keeping

with French interests. This view was shared by the team of experts who, in June of 2008, presented the new white book, *Defense and National Security*. “The report backs Sarkozy’s position in calling for France to return to the integrated structures of NATO.”<sup>30</sup>

This gives rise to the question as to exactly how this “complete reintegration” should occur. Will France become another NATO member like all the rest? Will Paris abandon its motto “Friends, allies, but not aligned” and obediently join the Atlanticist camp? In short, will this mean the end of the “exception française” in matters of defense and security policy?

The answer must surely be no, since full reintegration will not be as all-encompassing as it sounds. While France will rejoin the DPC—where central issues such as, currently, the US missile shield will be decided—the same does not apply to the NPG. This will allow France to retain an autonomous decision-making power over the Force de Frappe. As Sarkozy has stated, “France’s nuclear deterrent will remain a strictly national responsibility.”<sup>31</sup> Also, France will still not be placing any troops under NATO control during peacetime. Lastly, it is not expected that France will commit itself to a quantitatively complete reintegration in the alliance’s integrated structures, since to be represented in these structures at the same level as Britain or Germany, it would have to increase its presence there tenfold, from 120 to 1,200. Since this is beyond France’s capacity to accomplish over the short term, either financially or in terms of personnel, and since France considers this institution to be bloated even as it is, an “integration a minima” seems the more likely outcome, “representing greater symbolic and political than practical or military significance.”<sup>32</sup> At the NATO summit of 3–4 April 2009, France let it be known that it will send some 15 generals to the military structures.<sup>33</sup>

Also of great symbolic importance will be France’s future access to NATO command posts. “France can only take its place in NATO when it is granted a proper seat at the table”—was once Chirac’s, and now Sarkozy’s, mantra.<sup>34</sup> According to press reports, Sarkozy, or rather his chief advisor, Jean-David Levitte, has already gotten consent from James Jones, President Obama’s national security advisor, that France can assume the ACT command in Norfolk as well as the regional command in Lisbon, to which Paris has contributed significantly.<sup>35</sup>

Knowledge of these plans and the general prospect of reintegration sparked a lively debate within France, since resistance to Sarkozy’s assault against the Gaullist holy of holies extends beyond the military itself. The

general public is also concerned that Sarkozy's new NATO policy could undermine France's international clout and reduce its influence and the independence that has allowed it to say things that others only think. Former Socialist foreign minister, Hubert Védrine, put it in particularly stark terms: Were France to become a "normal ally," many countries would view this as its "re-subordination under the US;" it would lead to the "marginalization of French power internationally."<sup>36</sup> Others fear the surrender of an important element of French identity.<sup>37</sup> Still others demand that the link between reintegration and the Europeanization of NATO be strictly enforced. Especially widespread are the doubts that Sarkozy's new NATO policy will provide ESDP the critical momentum it needs. Is it not more likely that, through reintegration, France will sacrifice its traditional ambitions, wonders Laurent Zecchini, who concludes that "La messe atlantiste est dite" [the Atlanticism is only so-called].<sup>38</sup>

To politically neutralize accusations that the final result of this process would be France's unconditional reintegration into NATO, Prime Minister Françoise Fillon coupled the parliamentary debate that took place 17 March 2009 to a confidence vote, so that representatives serving in the majority who were opposed to the move would be bound by parliamentary discipline.<sup>39</sup> In addition, Sarkozy sought to demonstrate his independence vis-à-vis the new US president during the summit marathon in early April (the G20 in London, the NATO anniversary in Strasbourg and Kehl, and the EU summit in Prague). Like other Europeans, for instance, he followed through only to a limited degree on Obama's appeal to demonstrate greater engagement in Afghanistan. And he openly opposed Obama's view that Turkey should be made a full member of the EU. A certain degree of competition between the two leaders became evident over the issue of future disarmament policy. As departing head of the EU Council, Sarkozy had, as early as 8 December 2008, gotten EU foreign ministers to agree to a statement devoted to nuclear disarmament. As part of preparations for the review of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, set for 2010, the EU was thus making the first concrete proposals for nuclear disarmament.<sup>40</sup> Sarkozy wanted to signal the new US president that Europe has a right to have a say in the matter, too. Obama, on the other hand, considers the vision of a nuclear-free world—as he proposed to great effect on 5 April 2009 in Prague—to be an integral part of his claim to global leadership.<sup>41</sup> Sarkozy has downplayed the implications of Obama's scheme, indicating that the US president is merely drawing on existing measures and pro-

posals to camouflage the United States' previous policy of delaying such efforts.<sup>42</sup>

In summary, it can be said that despite having only just completed reintegration into NATO, a France that still reserves certain special privileges to itself while seeking to limit US claims to leadership cannot be said to have simply conformed, nor has it aligned itself as much as one may have thought. A complete end to the exception française is therefore not in the offing.

## **The Catalytic Potential of France's New NATO Policy: Future Prospects**

President Sarkozy carried through on France's full reintegration into NATO because of the significant catalytic potential he attaches to it. The backing he received from Germany at the Munich Security Conference in February 2009 offered the first indication that he was correct. On 4–5 February, he and Chancellor Angela Merkel jointly presented a paper regarding the future of the alliance and of EU-NATO relations, proffering Franco-German proposals that for the first time were set forth without prior consultation with the new US administration.<sup>43</sup> What is especially worth emphasizing about this remarkable, content-rich initiative is Merkel's and Sarkozy's call for joint decision making within the alliance—since “one-sided moves would be contrary to the spirit of partnership”—and their demand that strengthening European security policy be a premise of transatlantic equality, saying, “We Europeans must speak with one voice.” Most evident, however, is their shared opposition to the transformation of NATO into a global security agency of the sort the United States has long sought to establish. Paris and Berlin, by contrast, “do not want to reinvent” NATO fundamentals, and they recognize Article 5 of the NATO Treaty as the “core element” of what is an “essentially military alliance.” In this way, Merkel and Sarkozy have established a clearly outlined framework interwoven with Franco-German objectives for the debate over a new NATO strategy now set to begin. And they take the view of the new US administration at its word, as expressed by the new national security advisor, Gen James Jones, who has promised the allies increased cooperation and reciprocal coordination.<sup>44</sup> It appears that France's new NATO policy can act as a catalyst to the degree that Germany, with France as a full NATO member by its side, is prepared to substantially strengthen Europe's foreign and security policy.

On the other hand, the actual consummation of France's return to NATO has produced no direct vitalizing effects within the alliance. Reintegration became practically a non-event during NATO's anniversary celebration. The "Strasbourg/Kehl Summit Declaration" states laconically: "We warmly welcome the French decision to fully participate in NATO structures; this will further contribute to a stronger alliance." Even Point 20 of the declaration, in which NATO "recognizes the importance of a stronger and more capable European defense and welcomes the EU's efforts to strengthen its capabilities and its capacity to address common security challenges," fails to offer much promise for a Europe of defense.<sup>45</sup>

For that reason, we will have to wait on a new alliance strategy (which was commissioned at the anniversary summit and will be out by 2010) to assess the actual catalytic effect of France's new NATO policy on Europe's role in the alliance. It is primarily up to Europeans to achieve substantive changes. Are France's 26 EU teammates at all ready and willing to credibly divide up power and the responsibilities of burden sharing in a reformed alliance? Only if they are will it be clear that Sarkozy's gambit has worked and his new NATO policy has produced a real reorientation of the alliance. **ISSQ**

## Notes

1. Since Kehl did not offer a suitable backdrop for the ceremonies, the anniversary's evening events were held in Baden-Baden.
2. Jean-Pierre Maulny, "Frankreich und seine zukuenftige Stellung in der NATO—eine politische, keine militärische Debatte" ["France and its Future Role in NATO—a Political, not Military Debate"], in *Frankreich-Analysen der FES*, November 2007, 2, [http://library.fes.de/cgi-bin/populo/digbib.pl?f\\_SER=frankreich-analyse&t\\_listen=x&sortierung=jab](http://library.fes.de/cgi-bin/populo/digbib.pl?f_SER=frankreich-analyse&t_listen=x&sortierung=jab).
3. Winfried Veit, "Bruch oder Bluff? Französische Aussenpolitik unter Sarkozy" ["Broken or Bluff? French Foreign Policy under Sarkozy"], in *IPG*, 2/2008, 33, [http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/ipg/ipg-2008-2/04\\_a\\_veit\\_d.pdf](http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/ipg/ipg-2008-2/04_a_veit_d.pdf).
4. Jolyon Howorth, *European integration and defence: The ultimate challenge?* Chaillot Paper no. 43 (Paris: Institute for Security Studies, 2000), 18.
5. Kai Burmester, "Atlantische Annäherung—Frankreichs Politik gegenüber der NATO und den USA," ["Atlantic Approach—France's Policy towards NATO and the USA"], in *Die verhinderte Grossmacht: Frankreichs Sicherheitspolitik nach dem Ende des Ost-West Konflikts* [*The Indisposed Great Power: France's Security Policy after the East-West Conflicts*], eds. Hanns W. Maull, Michael Meimeth, and Christoph Neshöver (Opladen: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 1997), 107. See also Gisela Müller-Brandeck-Bocquet, *Frankreichs Europapolitik* [*French European Policy*] (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, 2004), 111ff, 133ff.
6. Joxe is quoted in Burmester, "Atlantische Annäherung," 101.

7. Wichard Woyke, *Deutsch-französische Beziehungen seit der Wiedervereinigung: Das Tandem fasst wieder Tritt* [German-French Relations since the Reunification] (Opladen: Leske & Budrich, 2004), 136.
8. Jolyon Howorth, “La France, l’OTAN et la sécurité européenne: statu quo ingérable, nouveau introuvable” [“France, NATO and European security: status quo unsustainable, new balance unobtainable”], *Politique Étrangère*, 4/2002, 1005. An English version is available on the IFRI Web site: [www.ifri.org](http://www.ifri.org).
9. Dominique David, “France/OTAN: la dernière marche” [“France/NATO: the latest march”], *Politique Étrangère*, 2/2008, 431.
10. Ibid.
11. Léo Michel, “Liaison dangereuse: Kehrt Frankreich tatsächlich zurück in die NATO-Strukturen?” [“Dangerous liaison: France actually returns into NATO structures?”], *Internationale Politik*, March 2008, 35.
12. Maulny, “Frankreich und seine zukünftige Stellung in der NATO,” 2.
13. Frédéric Bozo, “France and NATO under Sarkozy: End of the French Exception?” working paper (Paris: Fondation pour l’innovation politique, 2008), 6.
14. Nicolas Sarkozy (speech, Conference of Ambassadors, Paris, 27 August 2007), <http://www.elysee.fr/download/?mode=press&filename=embassadeur-27-08-07.pdf>.
15. Nicolas Sarkozy (speech, US Congress, 7 November 2007), <http://www.elysee.fr/edito/index.php?id=23>.
16. Nicolas Sarkozy (speech, NATO summit, Bucharest, 3 April 2008), [http://www.elysee.fr/documents/index.php?mode=view&lang=fr&cat\\_id=7&press\\_id=1243](http://www.elysee.fr/documents/index.php?mode=view&lang=fr&cat_id=7&press_id=1243).
17. Bozo, “France and NATO under Sarkozy,” 5.
18. Gisela Müller-Brandeck-Bocquet, “The big Member States’ influence on the shaping of the European Union’s Foreign, Security and Defense Policy,” in *The Future of the European Foreign, Security and Defense Policy after Enlargement*, ed. Gisela Müller-Brandeck-Bocquet (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlag, 2006), 25–53.
19. Sarkozy is quoted in *Le Monde*, 18 June 2008.
20. See Müller-Brandeck-Bocquet, “Frankreichs Europapolitik” and “Big Member States’ influence.”
21. Müller-Brandeck-Bocquet, “Frankreichs Europapolitik,” 133ff; and “Wie halten wir es mit Amerika? Die transatlantischen Beziehungen, die Konstruktion Europas und die deutsch-französische Zusammenarbeit in der Ära Kohl,” [“How do we keep America? Transatlantic relations, the construction of Europe and the Franco-German cooperation in the Kohl era”], *Historisch-politische Mitteilungen: Archiv für Christlich-Demokratische Politik* [Historical and political messages: Archive for Christian-democratic policy] 14/2007, 280ff.
22. Bozo is also skeptical; see his “France and NATO under Sarkozy,” 9ff.
23. See Point 3.1 of the French presidential agenda, which contains numerous proposals for improvements in capabilities.
24. *Le Monde*, 10 October 2007; and Veit, “Bruch oder Bluff?” 45.
25. Ireland’s challenge to the Lisbon Treaty has serious consequences with respect to the priority given to the ESDP, because it means that it will not be possible in the foreseeable future to make use of the means for structural cooperation that the treaty would establish and because it prevents the new office of the European foreign minister from properly developing.
26. European Council, “Conclusions of the Chair,” Brussels, 12 December 2008, Doc. 17271/08.
27. European Council, “Declaration of 8 December 2008 on Strengthening ESDP Capabilities,” Doc. 16840/08. Specific projects include, among others, the establishment of a European air-

transport fleet, improvements in reconnaissance, and increased cooperation in armaments production to implement the capabilities development plan of the European Defense Agency (EDA).

28. Ronja Kempin, “Frankreich und die Annäherung von NATO und EU” [France and the Approach of NATO and the EU”], *SWP-Aktuell*, April 2008, 2. Regarding the European Command Center, see Gisela Müller-Brandeck-Bocquet, “Deutsch-französische Beziehungen und das Projekt ‘Friedensmach Europa’” [German-French Relations and the Project ‘Peace Power Europe’”], in *Berliner Friedenspolitik? Militärische Transformation—Zivile Impulse—Europäische Einbindung [Berlin Peace Project? Military Transformation—Civilian Impulses—European Integration]*, eds. Peter Schlotter, Wilhelm Nolte, and Renate Grasse (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlag, 2008), 233–60.

29. *Le Monde*, 4 October 2008. For a critical view, see Ronja Kempin and Marco Overhaus, “Kein grosser Sprung in der Entwicklung der ESDP: Lehren aus der französischen Ratpräsidentschaft” [“No great leap in the development of the ESDP: Lessons from the French presidency”], *SWP-Aktuell*, January 2009.

30. Ronja Kempin, “Modernisierung der französischen Sicherheits- und Verteidigungspolitik” [“Modernization of the French security and defense policy”], *SWP-Aktuell*, August 2008. The white book also makes the case for an increased Europeanization of French defense and security policy and calls for the expansion of autonomous EU planning and command capacities.

31. Sarkozy is quoted in *Le Monde*, 18 June 2008. See also Sarkozy’s address of 11 March 2008, in which he officially announced his reintegration policy, *Le Monde*, 13 March 2009.

32. Bozo, “France and NATO under Sarkozy,” 14. See also Kempin, “Frankreich und die Annäherung von NATO und EU,” 2.

33. *Le Monde*, 4 April 2009.

34. Sarkozy is quoted in *Le Monde*, 5 February 2009.

35. *Le Monde*, 5 February 2009; *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, 20 February 2009.

36. Védrine is quoted by Michel, “Liaison dangereuse,” 35.

37. Modem-Chef F. Bayrou, *Le Monde*, 5 February 2009.

38. *Le Monde*, 11 March 2009.

39. The general public responded positively to the step, with 58 percent expressing support for the decision—70 percent of the UMP voters and 52 percent of the PS voters.

40. Urging, for example, a ban on the production of fissionable materials as well as a continuation of the START Treaty between the United States and Russia. See European Council, “Council Statement on Strengthening International Security of 8 December 2008,” Doc. 16751/08.

41. With his vision, Obama is aligning himself with the “Global Zero” initiative currently being circulated by a portion of the American security policy establishment.

42. *Le Monde*, 11 April 2009.

43. Reprinted on 4 February 2009 in the *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* and on 5 February 2009 in *Le Monde*.

44. See the interview with Jones in the *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, 9 February 2009.

45. See the “Strasbourg/Kehl Summit Declaration” at [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news\\_52837.htm?mode=pressrelease](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_52837.htm?mode=pressrelease). This passage appears verbatim in the “Declaration on Alliance Security,” [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news\\_52838.htm?mode=pressrelease](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_52838.htm?mode=pressrelease).